



Broadcasting  
Board of  
Governors

# Impact through Innovation and Integration

BBG Strategic Plan 2012-2016



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Broadcasting  
Board of  
Governors

## **Preface to the New BBG Strategy**

Impact through Innovation and Integration is the third strategic plan of the Broadcasting Board of Governors since its inception as an independent agency in 1998, and the first under the direction of the Board that took office in July, 2010.

As with previous agency strategic plans, this one encompasses the missions and operations all five BBG media properties – the Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia, (RFA), the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB – Radio and TV Martí), and the Middle East Broadcast Networks (MBN – Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa).

The BBG's first strategic plan, entitled “Marrying the Mission to the Market,” called on U.S. international broadcasting to adjust to major market forces with the end of the Cold War, specifically to distribute programming across ever-larger networks of affiliate stations as such outlets were exploding in number and influence.

The first plan was timely in aiding the BBG to meet post-9/11 challenges – producing mission-driven products that could attract significant audiences. From 2002 onward, the agency launched numerous new media outlets in the Middle East and beyond, including 24/7 Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa in Arabic.

The second plan built on the first, taking stock of a world affected by extremism but by persistent authoritarianism as well. In the dynamic of market factors and mission imperatives, it recalibrated BBG's approach to renew emphasis on the latter.

From 2001 to 2009, BBG's budget grew from \$425 to more than \$750 million, and worldwide audiences surged from 100 to 175 million.

All the while, the agency contended with longstanding structural challenges associated with the legacies of broadcast organizations created at different times and for different reasons over nearly 70 years. Distinct legal frameworks and personnel and administrative procedures across both federal and non-federal entities, language service duplication, and complex chains of command have inhibited operational effectiveness.

The new (July 2010) BBG board has prioritized addressing these issues. The fiscal situation in the federal government has made doing so urgent.

The BBG has substantial resources trapped in bureaucratic inefficiency and redundancy. Rationalizing the enterprise to put more assets on the front lines of our multimedia operations in more than 100 countries worldwide is critical to future success.

Thus, as with the U.S. government overall, the BBG needs a fiscal strategy and a growth strategy. We have to realign agency structures and finances to accomplish the mission Congress has asked us to do.

This is the immediate context for this third BBG strategy. It is predicated on the dual aims of fiscal and structural reform and assertive audience growth and mission fulfillment.

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## Summary of the Plan

The BBG's Strategic Plan, 2012–2016, addresses the critical challenges and new opportunities marked by worldwide political and economic upheaval and a historic communications revolution now facing the agency and our brand name organizations – Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa, and Radio and TV Martí.

The global demand for objective news, analysis, and engagement remains high. The U.S. capacity to fill that demand – through the most dynamic media technologies and news-gathering strategies – must advance to meet both our nation's foreign policy requirements and our audiences' information needs.

To have impact today, the BBG must innovate as never before. To have the resources and management structures to enable such innovation, the agency must integrate its operations. These core imperatives are reflected in the title of the new plan, ***Impact through Innovation and Integration.***

## An Updated Mission Statement

In light of the new operating environment, the BBG has revised its mission statement: To inform, engage, and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.

The mission upholds the agency's role as a journalistic organization and advances the utility of accurate, credible news and information to support democratic transformation across the Middle East, North Africa, and elsewhere; to counter extremist propaganda in Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen; and to throw a light on human rights abuses in Belarus, Burma, China, Cuba, North Korea, Russia, and beyond.

The new mission also acknowledges and seeks to drive the BBG's growing role in facilitating our audiences' own contributions to news and information flows and to encourage them to share this content with us and with one another. Citizen journalism, user-generated content, and peer-to-peer sharing are vital components of the new information space. The BBG will nurture these activities by taking important strides forward in social as well as traditional media.

All this the BBG does to carry forward the agency's mandates from Congress to: (1) provide accurate, comprehensive news; (2) to represent U.S. society and culture; and (3) to present and discuss U.S. policy. By adapting the agency's work to the realities of today's evolving media and audience circumstances, we will best be able to fulfill these imperatives going forward.

## **Ambitious Strategic and Performance Goals**

Our aspirations are large. The BBG already is one of the world's largest news-gathering and reporting enterprises with more than 80 language services, 50 overseas news bureaus, 4000 employees, and 1500 stringer reporters. Our five media entities generate original reporting every day from and around the world's hotspots, primarily in vernacular languages for target audiences in these areas.

Yet too little of this rich content is translated and shared across the BBG to augment international news coverage for other agency vernacular services, or made available to other global audiences in English. We aim to change this by harnessing agency editorial output for internal sharing and launching a Web-based aggregation platform for external distribution.

The BBG believes that by taking this and other key steps, we will be able to accomplish our over-riding strategic goal: *To become the world's leading international news agency by 2016, focused on our mission and impact.*

The goal refers to the BBG's focus on countries that lack free media as well as freedom and democracy and, as such, constitute U.S. national security imperatives. In service to these places, the agency aims to be the leader (not to rival U.S. commercial broadcasting entities).

The agency's performance goal in support of this objective is equally ambitious: *To reach 216 million in global weekly audience by 2016.*

## **Key Tactical Steps**

The goals we have set are bold given the intensely competitive global information environment, real-world limitations on our ability to report and disseminate the news from countries that deny our journalists visas and jam our broadcasts, and the difficult federal government budget environment.

To meet the targets, the BBG will pursue an implementation plan that combines both restructuring and growth steps. The former seek to end a system of U.S. international broadcasting that traps resources in inefficiency and duplication and fails to leverage our collective strengths. The latter aim to enhance our performance at the language service level and take advantage of opportunities across our broadcast territories to expand reach and impact in fulfillment of our mission and congressional mandates.

For the 2012-2016 period, there are a dozen key tactical steps:

- Unify the Agency into one organization, many brands
- Launch a Global News Network
- Seize targeted growth opportunities
- Focus on the global democracy wave and pockets of extremism
- Rationalize program delivery
- Combat Internet censorship and jamming

- Elevate and expand social media innovation
- Employ leading-edge communication techniques and technologies
- Engage the world in conversation about America
- Nurture a dynamic, dedicated workforce
- Spur development through targeted media Initiatives and training
- Sharpen understanding of impact through state-of-the-art research.

The BBG's year-long strategic review has identified specific organizational reforms to create a more robust and efficient broadcast organization. These include establishing a CEO to manage the agency's day-to-day affairs; consolidating all senior administrative and management functions into one, integrated network management operation; assessing the feasibility of merging the three grantee organizations (RFE/RL, RFA, and MBN), and exploring the de-federalization of VOA and OCB as well as the International Broadcasting Bureau, the federal BBG components. The aim is to maximize operational flexibility, efficiency, and compatibility to drive fulfillment of our mission.

Growth does not hinge exclusively on restructuring, however. Better results will come in the first instance from actions we take in our markets to improve the positioning, branding, audience targeting, distribution, and other factors of our language services.

The BBG will thus execute on a wide range of on-the-ground priorities while pursuing restructuring, keeping in mind the broad goal to become the world's leading international media organization working to support free, open, democratic societies with a five-year target of 216 million regular users of our content worldwide.

## **Performance Goals and Measures**

In implementing the Plan, the agency will chart performance through our ability to: (1) increase global audience reach; (2) produce high-quality, credible, and relevant content; (3) ensure effective, strategic program delivery; and (4) achieve substantive impact within the target audiences and societies consistent with a multi-factor measure to be developed over the course of the Plan.

Audience reach, reflected in the 216 million goal, will be a key success measure, as will audience perceptions of the quality and reliability of our news and the degree to which we enhance our audiences' understanding of current events. With a new global research program to be in place in FY 2012, we will begin an assertive effort to measure performance using a robust set of new performance indicators, including whether we are driving news and discussion agendas in key markets.

# Impact through Innovation and Integration

BBG Strategic Plan, 2012-2016

*Narrative*

## Our Impact in the World

At the historic junction of global political and economic upheaval and a sweeping revolution in communications, U.S. international broadcasting faces exciting opportunities and critical challenges in its core mission to promote freedom and democracy. The global need for objective news, analysis and free debate has never been more timely or relevant:

- In the Middle East and North Africa, vibrant but uneven democratic transformation is being fueled by vital, instant news and information.
- Extremist propaganda – within or from Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, and elsewhere – stokes threats to U.S. national security by inciting violence against America and its allies.
- Country after country, from Belarus to Burma to Russia, represses human rights and restricts free flows of information.
- Governments that censor the news and seek to control the media act with increasing impunity. From China to Cuba, countries have declared war against the Internet and traditional media, including increased jamming of radio and satellite broadcasts.
- Millions in Africa, Haiti, and elsewhere who suffer the ravages of famine, natural disasters and disease desperately need humanitarian information lifelines.

Our nation's overseas media outlets – Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa, Radio Free Asia, and Radio and TV Martí – are vital, cost-effective national security assets whose impact is felt by some 187 million people weekly everywhere on the globe where critical U.S. interests are at stake. U.S. international broadcasting has evolved over six decades as broadcasting initiatives were created to meet national security challenges. To provide resources to increase our impact and meet future challenges, consolidation and rationalization are necessary.

U.S. international broadcasting supports societies in transition and in crisis. It provides an antidote to censored news; technologies to break through government information firewalls; and timely, life-saving information critical during humanitarian emergencies.

With global press freedom at a two-decade low, our value-added is to support freedom of press and expression, essential to fostering and sustaining free societies. Promoting the development of healthy, stable, democratic societies through credible, accurate journalism supports U.S. national interests.

Unconstrained by the demands of a commercial model – but fully independent editorially – BBG is responsive to U.S. foreign policy priorities. We reach people in their languages of

choice; in countries where advertising revenue to support independent journalism is limited or not available; where there are severe obstacles to developing relevant programming and hiring and training journalists; and where governments jam broadcasts and censor the Internet. In short, we go where other media outlets are reluctant to go, and we leave when the media environment provides the population what they need.

## **The New Global Information Environment**

As vital as our mission is, retaining and increasing our audiences and our impact will not be easy in the face of intense competition from traditional media outlets and expanding digital and social media alternatives.

Across the world, commercial, cable and satellite TV and FM radio stations continue to proliferate. TV remains the world's dominant medium for news and entertainment. Use of shortwave and AM radio continues to decline worldwide (although shortwave remains important to the BBG to reach critical audiences in a number of priority countries). The Internet continues to grow. Social media usage is increasing exponentially. Ownership of mobile phones has reached near saturation levels in even the poorest countries.

It is crucially important that we reach audiences on their preferred media platforms. Almost always, this means using multiple platforms simultaneously. Yet we do not have unfettered access to these platforms or unlimited resources. Governments routinely deny access to local TV and radio broadcasting, or local media laws restrict the type of content foreign sources can distribute. Some countries – including Iran, China, North Korea, Cuba and Ethiopia – jam our broadcasts and block our Internet sites.

Information technology and access has empowered citizens to develop their own news and stories independently of traditional channels. Information and ideas now flow largely through networks, not hierarchies. Online communities and conversations abound amid growing information chaos and clutter. Going forward, it will be increasingly difficult for any one organization to drive the news or discussion agenda. Just getting heard will be hard.

Yet while the world is awash in media, press freedom stands at a two-decade low, according to Freedom House. More media does not necessarily mean better journalism. In many countries, the Internet is under wholesale assault. Reporters Without Borders cites China, Cuba, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkmenistan, and another half-dozen countries as “enemies of the Internet.” The absence of free flows of credible information in many of our markets, despite the proliferation of media, further points up our relevance and opportunity.

Against this backdrop are the activities of other government-sponsored international media. Western government-supported media are experiencing severe budgetary pressures leading them to eliminate language services, terminate distribution networks, and lay off journalists. At the same time, China, Russia, Iran, Qatar, and other countries are well-financed and expanding their international media efforts. China has a multi-billion dollar global information campaign underway, strengthening the Xinhua News Agency as well as China Radio International and CCTV. Qatar, building on the Al Jazeera brand in Arabic and English, is soon to launch services in Serbo-Croatian, Swahili, and Turkish.

Non-state actors, most notably those who support violent extremism, are also active in global media. Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and their affiliates carry out aggressive campaigns of disinformation and propaganda, not only in the Middle East and South Asia but in East and West Africa and around the world via the Internet.

Compounding the challenge is the burgeoning global youth population. In nearly every one of our markets, the median age of the population is between 18 and 30. New audiences have to come from among the hundreds of millions in this cohort. For the most part these people have never heard of our traditional radio and TV stations, or our Web sites. Their media use strongly favors digital platforms. Their interest in news, our traditional strength, is very limited.

## **The Urgency of Innovation**

We have to innovate as never before to remain strategically relevant in the current geopolitical context and to compete effectively in the new global information space. The innovation we need is not just about new content or products; it's about creating altogether new ways of doing business to accomplish the agency's mission.

Innovation means, for example, harnessing our original reporting now spread across 59 different language services to power an unprecedented Web-based global news network. It means developing automated translation that will allow users anywhere in the world to tap into this new network and consume our products in their native language. It means exploiting delivery technologies newly prominent in key markets, such as satellite-delivered video for China, Central Asia and Southeast Asia.

It means launching a prototype TV channel in Latin America that features crowd-sourced content targeted to youth. It means working with other elements of the U.S. Government, such as placing FM antennas at U.S. embassies in Africa as a low-cost, high-impact solution for badly needed additional distribution. And it means partnering with other Western international broadcasters in global research efforts to share research techniques and costs in ways that will expand our audience and market knowledge base to inform strategies.

## **A Leader in Internet Censorship Circumvention and Anti-Jamming**

For over 60 years U.S. international broadcasting has fought censorship in all its forms. Today, a key strategic priority for the BBG is to assist the world's citizens to gain access to information on all platforms, and in every place where governments routinely censor information for political purposes. BBG's efforts to counter Internet censorship have grown exponentially in the past few years, with significant results for the millions of users who now have unfettered access to the Internet. BBG also seeks to raise a strong voice on the international stage in order to expose the issues of satellite jamming, censorship and Internet blocking. BBG's efforts are complemented through close coordination with the State Department.

## The Need for Integration

Today's economic realities argue for correcting our organizational inefficiencies. The agency must be restructured and repositioned to provide a leaner, more streamlined and efficient entity to meet today's challenges and those that lie ahead.

The BBG is a complex amalgam of broadcast entities created by Congress at different points in time over the last 70 years in response to specific foreign policy challenges. It encompasses multiple media properties, some Federal and some non-Federal, with different legal and administrative frameworks; 59 languages but more than 80 language services with 40 percent overlap; nearly 4,000 employees; 50+ overseas bureaus; and 1,500 stringer reporters – all in organizational silos with little cross-cutting coordination.

The current structure complicates managing resources for highest impact as well as the integration and projection of core talents and capabilities. It obstructs efforts to transform the agency's assets into an integrated network that can take advantage of the wide-ranging, highly professional newsgathering activities done by each BBG entity. It also restricts our ability to merge our high-quality journalism with user engagement and peer-to-peer information sharing.

Integration must therefore accompany innovation as an operational imperative. We must break down a stove-piped bureaucracy of separate, semi-autonomous entities, and shape a robust, integrated, international media network with multiple brands targeted to markets where they still strongly resonate.

The BBG's year-long strategic review identifies a new organization through which a more effective broadcast organization can be built:

- The agency's part-time board of directors will attend to broad strategic issues, maintenance of the firewall to protect the independence and integrity of the agency's journalism, as well as oversight of the BBG mission; a CEO selected by the Board and subject to the Board's supervision will manage the agency's day-to-day affairs.
- All senior administrative and management functions including strategy, development, distribution, marketing, legal, communications, social media innovation, research and evaluation, will consolidate into one, integrated network management operation.
- The Agency has begun a study to explore the feasibility of consolidating the three grantee organizations (RFE/RL, RFA, and MBN), pending due diligence, into a single corporate structure sharing a unified administrative and legal framework, while retaining their journalistic missions. The due diligence will include a preliminary look at the short- and long-term financial ramifications and the other benefits and costs of consolidation.
- We will explore de-federalization of the federal agency components, beginning with a feasibility study to assess key legal and administrative issues. Optimally,

all BBG components will share the same legal and administrative framework to maximize operational flexibility and integration.

- We will end language services in countries with more developed, independent media, and that are no longer strategic priorities. Where we have two U.S.-funded media properties operating in a given country, now largely working in isolation of one another, they will cooperate, with shared bureaus, stringers, and distribution networks where feasible. Each will provide complementary, not duplicative, content.
- We will make wholesale changes to the way we distribute our content. We are currently configured largely as we were in the 1980s, with substantial resources devoted to shortwave broadcasting. Global media use now strongly favors TV, the Internet, and FM radio as well as social media. Shortwave is vital in a half-dozen countries. But elsewhere we will sharply draw down our shortwave capacity to reallocate the resources to the new platforms our audiences are using.
- We will forward deploy substantial news-gathering and reporting as well as program production assets away from Washington and towards the target markets, establishing strategic, efficient regional hubs and expanding overseas bureaus. This will enable more comprehensive and timely coverage of local issues and events which matter most to our audiences and will drive the planned global news network.
- We will seek the repeal of a decades-long ban on domestic dissemination contained in the 1948 U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act (“Smith-Mundt” Act). Adopted in the age of cross-border communication via radio, this Act did not envision either the Internet or satellite broadcasting, which do not honor national boundaries. With all of the BBG’s 59 languages available via the web, the agency cannot comply with this outdated statute. In addition, to the extent that BBG-sponsored programming should be available to significant expatriate communities in the United States, we are unable to do so without acting counter to the limitation. To remedy this disconnect, the BBG has proposed, and the Administration approved, draft legislation to repeal the Smith-Mundt domestic dissemination ban as it applies to the BBG.

## **Our New Identity, Mission Statement, and Principal Goals**

By fundamentally restructuring and repositioning the agency we will create a new organizational identity with a new name - “Broadcasting Board of Governors” dates to our establishment as part of the now-defunct U.S. Information Agency in the mid-1990s. It is confusing, and fails to convey the diverse media operation we represent. The new identity will be corporate in nature. Our current brands will remain the public faces for our audiences, who have come to know and trust them.

None of the proposed restructuring and new identity changes our mission. It remains solidly to support freedom of press and freedom of expression. Yet, as our new direction makes clear, in today’s global information environment we can’t simply focus on generating great

content, as important as it is. We must also embrace our audiences' content and the conversations they want to have.

We capture this in the following revised mission statement:

*To inform, engage and connect people around the world in support of freedom and democracy.*

We will aggressively pursue this mission across the Middle East and North Africa and elsewhere as democracy movements evolve and emerge; in China, Iran, North Korea and Cuba and all the places that deny their citizens access to independent news and information; in Africa and elsewhere not only to provide humanitarian relief but also to aid democracy formation and development; and in the face of extremist propaganda and hate speech from wherever they emanate.

Despite budgetary pressures, we will not accept that our audiences and our impact will shrink. Through the steps outlined here we intend to prepare and position the new agency for smart growth. Our strategic review of all agency broadcast operations over the last year has identified more than a dozen new media initiatives that will enable us to substantially expand global audience reach and impact at current resource levels.

Consistent with our review and future direction, we have set the following as our over-arching strategic objective:

*To become the world's leading international news agency by 2016,  
focused on the agency's mission and impact.*

In support of this objective, and as a principal measure of its accomplishment, we have also set the following performance goal:

*To reach 216 million in global weekly audience by 2016.*

## **Implementation Challenges**

The goals we have set are ambitious given the intensely competitive global information environment, real-world limitations on our ability to report and disseminate the news from countries that deny our journalists visas and jam our broadcasts, and the difficult federal government budget environment.

While much of the world's media is not free, its sheer abundance clutters the marketplace and makes breaking through to new audiences difficult. And other media organizations, public and private, are just as determined, as we are to succeed. Many of them enjoy competitive advantages due to funding, ideological and cultural affinities with target audiences, and other factors.

Change on the order we propose is inherently unsettling. There will be resistance within and outside the organization. Employees will naturally worry about their jobs; stakeholders will want to know about possible loss or diminution of service for specific countries. There will also be legitimate differences over strategies and tactics.

What would most keep us from achieving our goals, however, would be to perpetuate a system that traps resources in inefficiency and duplication, keeps people and programs stove-piped, and fails to leverage our collective strengths.

## **Gauging Success**

We will measure success in new as well as traditional ways. Audience reach, reflected in the 216 million goal, will remain a key success measure, as will audience perceptions of the reliability of our news and the degree to which we enhance our audiences' understanding of current events. However, impact can seldom be reduced to a single quantitative factor. Impact is ultimately about whether we make a difference in the lives of our audiences in ways that correspond to the larger aims of our efforts. With a new global research program to be in place in FY 2012, we will begin an assertive effort to measure performance using a robust set of new performance indicators, including whether we are driving news and discussion agendas in key markets.

## **Call to Action**

The Board, in setting forth the above actions and goals, is expressing its fundamental belief that the agency is up to the challenges. We believe we have the people and creativity and, if we restructure and reallocate resources strategically, the material resources to be what we aim to be: *the world's leading international news agency by 2016 with 216 million global audience, focused on the agency's mission and impact.*

The BBG, in the size and scope of our news-gathering and reporting, the daily broadcast hours, the number of language services, and many other criteria, is already a leading international news agency. Yet, due to inefficiency, redundancy, and lack of coordination, we have not lived up to our potential. It is time to do so.

# Impact through Innovation and Integration

BBG Strategic Plan, 2012-2016

## *Tactical Steps*

The following describe key tactical steps in support of agency strategy. Consistent with Board priorities, they incorporate both actions to restructure the enterprise and to expand agency reach and impact. Enterprise and growth strategies and tactics are inter-related. Launching a global new network, for example, is about both realigning editorial support and better serving audiences with BBG original reporting.

The purpose of restructuring is to streamline management and free up resources to enable growth of reach and impact at the language service level. Yet growth does not hinge exclusively on restructuring. Better performance also depends on expert positioning, branding, audience targeting, distribution, and many other factors.

The BBG will thus execute on a wide range of tactics while pursuing restructuring, keeping in mind the broad goal to become the world's leading international media organization working to support free, open, democratic societies with a five-year target of 216 million regular users of our content worldwide.

### **#1: Unify the Agency into One Organization, Many Brands**

Owing to historical circumstance, the BBG is today a complex amalgam of diverse media properties with different legal and administrative frameworks headed by various full-time senior executives and a board of governors that also has supervisory authority. This structure inhibits effective intra-agency coordination, clear chains of command, and efficient sharing of news and program content. Back-office redundancy and inefficiency trap resources needed on the front lines of our media endeavors. Management and organizational integration is thus a prerequisite to drive innovation and impact. We must break down a stove-piped bureaucracy and shape a robust, unified, international media network. Optimally, all BBG components will share the same legal and administrative framework to maximize operational flexibility and integration. At the same time, the agency's brand names that still enjoy popularity with audiences and support by key stakeholders will continue. The aim of the reorganization is to strengthen the brands and support their execution with clearer direction and additional resources.

Specifically, we will:

- Restructure top agency management, appointing a single CEO to manage the agency's day-to-day affairs, with a part-time board of directors focused on strategy, budget, and public outreach.
- Reorganize senior administrative and management functions of the BBG and IBB front offices, including strategy, development, distribution, marketing, legal, communications, social media innovation, research and evaluation, to create one, integrated network operation.

- Explore the feasibility of merging the three BBG non-federal grantee organizations – RFE/RL, RFA, and MBN – into a single corporate entity with unified support systems (while retaining their distinct journalistic missions).
- Study options for de-federalizing the three BBG federal components – IBB, VOA, and OCB – to place them on an equal footing with the grantees (including careful review of any agency operations that would need to remain federal to ensure coordination in support of U.S. strategic interests).
- End language service duplication (and boost impact) by ensuring coordinated, complementary operations and content where two BBG broadcasters co-exist.
- Migrate separate operating systems for content management and other key functions onto common platforms to facilitate sharing and interoperability.
- Stress deployment of news-gathering and reporting as well as program production assets towards target markets, establishing regional hubs and expanding overseas bureaus, to enhance local service in vernacular languages and global service in English and other major international languages.
- Rename the agency to reflect its new character.

## **#2: Launch a Global News Network**

The BBG is one of the world's largest news-gathering and reporting enterprises with more than 80 language services, 50 overseas news bureaus, 4000 employees, and 1500 stringer reporters. Each of the agency's five media properties generates original reporting every day from and around the world's hotspots – the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, Burma, China, Egypt, Iran, North Korea, Russia, Syria, Yemen, et al – primarily in vernacular languages for target audiences in these areas. Too little of this rich content is translated and shared across the BBG to augment international news coverage for other BBG vernacular services (for example, MBN's Middle East reporting in Arabic for VOA and RFE/RL's Persian-speaking audiences in Iran) or made available to other global audiences in English. Creating a global news network at the BBG will seek to remedy both circumstances by harnessing agency editorial output for internal sharing and launching a Web-based aggregation platform for external distribution. The public-facing platform will focus on the BBG's original reporting with full attribution to BBG content providers (its aim is to supplement not replace current BBG news sites). Developing efficient, competent translation will be critical to the system overall.

Specifically, we will:

- Build the internal content-sharing network, aligning internal editorial support and coordination, as needed.
- Launch, with appropriate branding, a public-facing news aggregation site that distributes original reporting from across the BBG to global audiences in English (to start).
- Research and develop translation capacities, partnering, as appropriate, with outside organizations to access expertise and resources, as needed.

### **#3: Seize Targeted Growth Opportunities**

Despite intensely competitive global media environments, there are significant, targeted opportunities to expand our reach and impact across the world, as reflected in the findings of the agency's 2010-2011 strategy review. Populations in our target countries are overwhelmingly young – a challenge but also a chance for us to connect with a demographic that in the main has never even heard of us. Our audiences now are 62% male and 38% female – an imbalance ripe for correcting. Use of satellite TV is spreading, including in repressive societies where we lack other direct means of delivering our programs – pointing to the importance of developing new video products. In some instances, new resources will be needed; in many cases, however, innovation and hard work will be the keys to success. Readjusting our thinking and our strategies, stopping what isn't working and taking a risk on what might work, is critical. Boldness and ambition are requirements to get to our goal of 50 million additional audience by 2016.

Specifically, we will:

- Add new and more effective distribution – e.g., satellite TV for Central Asia, China, and Southeast Asia; BBG owned-and-operated FMs and new FM affiliate partners in Africa.
- Reach out to the now under-served and under-reached audiences of women and youth with the kinds of content and conversation they wish to have beyond traditional news and information paradigms.
- Create country-specific content streams in existing languages to augment news and information for priority countries.
- Introduce service in selected new languages to reach sizeable new audiences in other important countries where our products are urgently needed.
- Develop a global mobile strategy to exploit the explosive growth of this key platform, incorporating the range of applications from SMS to Web-based products to Intelligent Voice Recognition for populations with low literacy.
- Satisfy the world's growing appetite for learning English through TV and radio programs, online instruction, printed instructional materials, and innovative short-form videos posted on the Web.

### **#4: Prioritize Support for Democracy and Countering Pockets of Extremism**

A key geopolitical development of our day, and likely to remain so for the duration of this strategic plan, is the democratic transformation in the Middle East and North Africa and its repercussions for repressive governments across the world. U.S. foreign policy actively supports this movement. Secretary of State Clinton has noted: "The status quo is broken; the old ways of governing are no longer acceptable; it is time for leaders to lead with accountability, treat their people with dignity, respect their rights, and deliver economic opportunity. And if they will not, then it is time for them to go." Our agency, with a mission to inform, engage, and connect global audiences in support of freedom and democracy, has a critical role to play at this important juncture. We are active where democracy forces are at work, including Belarus, Burma, Cuba, China, Egypt, Iran, Libya, Yemen, Zimbabwe, and a host

of other countries. We must focus on these countries while sustaining and selectively expanding coverage as resources allow. We must also continue to focus on addressing areas beset by violent extremism, which is antithetical to democracy and U.S. national security. In Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, Somalia, and other places where Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and their affiliates operate, our accurate, credible news and information is an antidote to extremist propaganda.

Specifically, we will:

- Prioritize countries lacking freedom and democracy or faced with extremism where accurate, credible news and information are lacking; and boost service to these areas, where feasible.
- Ensure strong local news coverage, as warranted by events, to meet urgent audience needs in areas of crisis.
- Draw on the experiences of the world's many models of free societies, including the U.S., to allow intellectually curious listeners to arrive at their own reasoned political views.
- Nurture citizen journalism and channel user-generated content from inside repressive states.
- Link citizens within repressive societies and to external audiences through social media networks.
- Facilitate dialogue across religious, national and ethnic groups.

## **#5: Rationalize Program Delivery**

Across the world, commercial, cable and satellite TV and FM radio stations continue to proliferate. TV remains by far the world's dominant medium for news and entertainment. The Internet continues to grow. Social media usage is increasing exponentially. Ownership of mobile phones has reached near saturation levels in even the poorest countries. It is essential that we reach audiences on their preferred media platforms. Yet the agency's distribution methods and means have not strategically tracked the shifts in media use. We must therefore align how we deliver our content with how consumers now access it. In the process, we must correct mismatches in resource allocations and redirect funds to support today's most effective distribution systems. This effort is to be research-driven but with close attention to intangibles such as the limitations in knowing in some countries how effective certain distribution methods are. Ultimately, the agency is platform-agnostic. We seek to do what works best for the market at hand to get our content to as many users as possible.

Specifically, we will:

- Make pragmatic, research-based decisions on which shortwave and medium wave radio transmissions and facilities to continue, and which to draw down or close.
- Reallocate resources from selected, less effective cross-border transmissions to support new initiatives in more popular media.
- Increase direct-to-home satellite distribution of video and audio content.

- Expand local distribution through affiliation with strong local television and FM radio stations and, where possible, installation of FM transmitters.
- Use online and mobile distribution to enhance and complement broadcast media, reaching new audiences and building stronger connections with listeners and viewers of our radio and television broadcasts.

## **#6: Combat Internet Censorship and Jamming**

For almost 70 years U.S. international broadcasting has fought censorship in all its forms. Today, as the global media environment undergoes a dynamic revolution, access to a truly free press is actually in decline. Jamming of radio and TV broadcasts, including our own, continues in a number of countries. Journalists suffer harassment and violence daily. Media laws often restrict free flows of information, limiting the ability of international news organizations to distribute their content. The Internet in particular is under assault. Freedom House, in its Freedom on the Net 2011 survey notes: "Cyberattacks, politically motivated censorship, and government control over internet infrastructures are among the diverse and growing threats to Internet freedom." Reporters without Borders cites China, Cuba, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkmenistan, and another half-dozen countries as "enemies of the Internet." As a national security asset of the United States, as well as a respected news source for 187 million people in more than 100 countries, the agency upholds the right of citizens everywhere to receive and impart information without restriction. We work on many fronts to make news and information accessible to our global audiences with the aim of enabling not only unfettered access to our own products but also the full spectrum of independent news sources on the Internet.

Specifically, we will:

- Lead in assisting the world's citizens to gain access to information on all platforms, and in every place where governments routinely censor information for political purposes.
- Fund technologies that counter Internet censorship and Internet blocking.
- Advocate on the international stage to expose censorship in all its forms, from satellite and radio jamming to Internet blocking to harassment of journalists.
- Coordinate within the U.S. government, other international broadcasters, and allies to complement BBG efforts to defeat Internet censorship and all forms of jamming.

## **#7: Elevate and Expand Social Media Innovation**

New and powerful web, mobile, and social media tools are enabling increasingly diverse voices to be heard around the world. These tools have made media personal, moving the power from centralized broadcasters to a new class of bloggers, activists, videographers, and a content-generating public. The role of social media in the Arab Spring, for example, has been a wake-up call on the role of media in the lives of global citizens. They are using media not only to tell their stories on a digital world stage but also to connect with one another to chart the future of their communities and build new forms of civil society. Social media are

also changing the way news is gathered and distributed, requiring news organizations to adopt new work flows that allow them to use multiple platforms to deliver content to a global audience. Our agency must aggressively pursue an innovation agenda that develops the next generation of content, tools, and distribution platforms.

Specifically, we will:

- Enter into a “global conversation” with our audiences by using social media tools to identify, source, and distribute news content into the channels where people are having conversations about their community and the world.
- Build new partnerships to create tools that help us more efficiently and effectively translate content for a global audience around high-quality news and information.
- Identify the next generation of talent to create and present content that engages today’s audiences on the platforms most relevant to their lives.
- Use media and information to assist community leaders to build an open, civil society by delivering content that helps improve lives, such as information on health care and building entrepreneurship.
- Pursue partnerships with technologists around the globe who are building the next generation of digital media technology through mobile and social media.

## **#8: Employ Leading-Edge Communication Techniques and Technologies**

Congress stipulates that BBG programs “be designed so as to effectively reach a significant audience” – a very different challenge today than a decade ago. Over the next five years, audiences increasingly will be splintered by new competition as local media markets mature. Additionally, audiences will segment as they migrate from traditional means of international broadcast distribution, such as shortwave, to FM, television, satellite, mobile phones, and new media. We must stay on the cutting edge of emerging technologies. Our diverse audiences have different information needs and different media consumption habits. We must therefore avoid a one-size-fits-all approach, and resist the assumption that the audience will come to us. Instead, we must go to them, with the content they want on the platforms they prefer. The aim is to expand audience reach while preserving the core mission of disseminating factual news and information.

Specifically, we will:

- Optimize the media mix country by country, to ensure the right balance of TV, radio, new media, and mobile; and re-deploy funds for each consistent with consumer preferences and market circumstances.
- Sharpen audience segmentation and targeting to better address gender and age demographics, as well as psychographic segments.
- Tailor format and presentation styles to audience needs and media usage habits, creating content that can break through ever increasing clutter; employ short-form and depth-on-demand tactics, where appropriate.

- Exploit the falling cost of video production, updating our broadcasting facilities to support growing audience appetite for TV and video.
- Integrate and digitize all content – e.g. text, audio, photos, graphics, and video – on a common content management system to facilitate use across platforms, support on-demand needs of the audience, and increase use via syndication to affiliates.
- Develop a suite of new media products that can be easily deployed by language services based on market consumption data, with an eye toward maximizing opportunities for user generated content, peer-to-peer sharing, and audience interactivity.
- Heighten effective requisition and utilization of audience and market research.

### **#9: Engage the World in Conversation about America**

Representing American society and presenting and discussing U.S. policy are legislated mandates for the agency. Carrying them out requires sensitivity and creativity. Currents of anti-Americanism still run strong in some parts of the world, necessitating deft outreach on our part that stresses dialogue not monologue. The way people interact with media today, with emphasis on interaction, further affirms this approach. At the same time, America's still dominant role on the global stage makes our country a focal point of international attention, and our national language is the one tens of millions of people around the world seek to learn. Thus, obstacles to our engaging overseas audience are balanced by certain competitive advantages. VOA, in particular, is uniquely mandated and positioned to leverage these advantages to connect with diverse international audiences.

Specifically, we will:

- Serve as a Washington bureau for media outlets across the world that wish to engage with us interactively for news, analysis, and perspectives from the United States – on the model that has succeeded in Armenia, Bolivia, Turkey, et al.
- Emphasize English learning as a vehicle for positive audience engagement and interaction as well as information on American society and culture.
- Meet the global interest in American politics with in-depth coverage and analysis of national elections and coverage of other political events to impart the news and to elucidate the democratic process.
- Explore the development of global town halls that connect citizens abroad with citizens in America through an issues-based dialogue format facilitated by our media, including co-productions across our media organizations.
- Launch a series of regular contributions from leading voices in American society to communicate perspectives on technology, science, the arts and entertainment, sports, and other areas that research shows capture global attention, in conjunction with social media applications to foster feedback and discussion.
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## **#10: Nurture a Dynamic, Dedicated Workforce**

Our diverse, multi-cultural, and multi-talented workforce offers a rich range of experience and expertise to carry out the agency's mission. Key to success in a rapidly changing, highly competitive global media environment is flexibility to develop innovative products for our target countries consistent with emerging priorities, programming formats, and advances in technology. Enhanced skill sets are required to program for and transmit via multiple media platforms – radio, TV, Internet, mobile, and though social media. Our employees are most effective when they are well motivated, trained, and led. While measures of employee satisfaction on the federal side of the agency show signs of improvement, continued efforts to equip and energize the entire BBG workforce are critical we confront mounting competitive pressures worldwide.

Specifically, we will:

- Promote human capital planning and management as a top priority for senior executives, managers, and supervisors throughout the agency.
- Operate responsive, customer-oriented human resource departments.
- Step up recruitment of language-qualified talent and those with skills critical for multi-media, and retain them with an attractive combination of compensation, training, and a positive work environment, in the U.S. and at overseas locations.
- Maintain regular, two-way communications with employees about agency priorities, plans, and problems.
- Ensure a safe and secure work environment for all employees.

## **#11: Spur Development through Targeted Media Initiatives and Training**

Professional, independent media, in addition to fostering freedom and democracy, nurture development – as the World Bank and other institutions increasingly acknowledge. As one of the world's largest international broadcasters, operating in mostly under-developed countries with restricted media, the BBG is an invaluable U.S. asset for advancing development on two main fronts: (1) human development through programming on health, education, science and technology, entrepreneurship, English learning, and other subjects; and (2) development of professional journalism and independent media through training of local journalists and media operators and standing up media initiatives. Providing people with information that improves their everyday lives is a mission imperative, and also serves to extend our reach and impact. Journalism training is a congressional mandate for the BBG. For years we have partnered with other government agencies and non-governmental organizations on mutually beneficial development projects, ranging from a single program series on HIV/AIDS to entire language services for crisis areas (e.g., Somalia) to workshops on reporting skills. The BBG has always retained editorial control (a fixed requirement) over its content. Outside support brings energy, ideas, and resources to enable mission-critical activity that we might otherwise not be able to undertake. Enlarging our collaboration with sister federal agencies, foundations, universities, and private corporations in carrying out development initiatives is a key strategic opportunity.

Specifically, we will:

- Broaden outreach across the government, to the U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of State, Health and Human Services, and Department of Energy, to partner on programs of shared interest on topics such as health, women's empowerment, nuclear security and safety, and disaster preparedness.
- Seek support from foundations to pursue common objectives of improving human living conditions, including prevention and mitigation of disease, improving water and sanitation, and conflict resolution.
- Recruit corporate sponsors for initiatives that will attract their support and benefit the BBG's mission on, for instance, entrepreneurial skills and small business development.
- Represent the BBG at international forums on media development, focusing attention on the positive correlation between professional media and development.
- Expand international journalism and media training to support professional indigenous media in BBG's target countries and to enhance our appeal to prospective media partners (i.e., training their journalists as an inducement for affiliating with us).
- Integrate the development into agency strategy at the country and regional level to make it a central component on par with marketing and program placement.

## **#12: Sharpen Understanding of Impact through State-of-the-Art Research**

Gauging impact is critical to broadcasters, management, and stakeholders alike for strategic and budgetary purposes. Agreed-upon definitions of impact have been elusive. Audience size is a factor, but impact cannot be reduced to this or any other single variable. A new global research program, set to coincide with the start of this Strategic Plan, will incorporate an enhanced effort to better define and measure the impact of agency media. This will drive fulfillment of three key requirements: (1) to measure as accurately as possible the performance of our programs and brands and our ability to report the results clearly and confidently to Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, and the American public; (2) to provide the operational elements of the agency with business intelligence that will lead to improved strategies at the program level; and (3) to understand the effect of our work on the audiences, media markets, and societies we target.

Specifically, we will:

- Continue primary research among target populations, using multi-method surveys and qualitative data gathering.
- Expand analytical capacity and data integration to enhance audience segmentation and targeting.
- Boost access to, and simplify analysis of, data to support strategic and programmatic decision-making.
- Facilitate access to BBG data within the U.S. government.
- Stand up newly agreed-upon research collaboration with BBG's Western government broadcasting counterparts.

## Consultation with Stakeholders

The BBG's Strategic Plan derives from the comprehensive strategy review that the agency undertook from September 2010 to May 2011 at the direction of the Board. Following that review, the agency engaged numerous stakeholders in Congress to solicit their views on agency draft plans. The agency has also briefed outside bodies that study public diplomacy and international communications. The current text incorporates all input received.

The agency's nine-month review examined all the BBG language services and target regions, covering each broadcast environment and challenges to transmission, program quality, program resources, and the ability to enhance program impact and relevance. The review began with in-depth consultations with senior agency management and language service heads and staffs at each of the BBG broadcast organizations, drawing on employee experiences and aspirations.

The review branched outside the agency to benefit from the advice of expert panels, assembled to comment on the political, economic, cultural, and journalistic environments in each BBG broadcast region, and to provide counsel on implementation strategies.

Some 75 people (current and former US ambassadors and other officials, academics, and representatives of think tanks) on a pro bono basis offered their assessment of leading strategic and media factors in the BBG's broadcast areas as well as their views as to the language services' unique value-added and impact. These sessions were open to staff of the language services. BBG Board members attended many of the review sessions.

The BBG's Strategy and Budget Committee called numerous meetings to hear interim reports and recommendations as the review proceeded, allowing senior broadcast management additional opportunities to express their views. The Committee then reported its findings to the full Board at its monthly meetings. The strategy elements in this budget request have driven the formulation of the agency's FY2013 budget.

In formulating its strategy, the agency has also reached out to key congressional committees, the employee union, and relevant think tanks to invite their input. Briefings have been provided to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Foreign Operations. In addition, members of the Board have reached out to individual Members of Congress who on our key agency committees, or who have had a long-standing interest in the agency.



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